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Senate's hard work to craft meaningful water protection measures became law today

LANSING – The groundbreaking, comprehensive legislation the Legislature has worked on to protect Michigan's waters was signed into law by the governor.

"Michigan's water supply must be protected now and for succeeding generations," said state Sen. Bruce Patterson, 7th District. "The law signed today conserves and safeguards our Great Lakes and our other wonderful water resources. I am very pleased Senate Republicans and Democrats worked together to ensure one of our state's great treasures."

Senate Bills 850-852, 854 and 857 create new standards for water withdrawals and permit-programs for water users to help avoid adverse impacts on the environment.

The package will:

- Strengthen the current prohibition against water diversion by requiring legislative oversight;
- Put in place a system to manage significant new water withdrawals that have the potential to impact our water and water-dependent natural resources;
- Implement an interim standard that will provide protections for key designated trout streams by defining critical zones around the streams;
- Develop an easy-to-use model to replace the interim standard that will allow a user to click on a map and determine if water use will cause an adverse impact;
- Establish a permitting program for water bottling operations. This will ensure waters used for this purpose do not impact our water dependent natural resources;
- Authorize the creation of groups of water users to work with the DEQ in crafting water plans that resolve water use problems before adverse impacts occur; and
- Require businesses that use our water to propose water use conservation measures.

"Just looking at a sample of what we've accomplished since the Great Lakes Task Force Report was issued a few years ago shows we are serious about this vitally important environmental issue," said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. "Everyone involved in this latest package of bills deserves credit for making good policy based on sound science that will stand the test of time. What we've created is a method to preserve one of Michigan's greatest natural resources for residents, job providers and tourists. At the same time we are ensuring that people will be able to enjoy Michigan's waters for many generations to come."

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